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MEMOIRE

ON

SOME QUESTIONS

RESPECTING THE

PROJECTED UNION

OF

GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

R. Mackenna (T.)

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Sed mea me fata et triſtia oracula Divum
His merſere malis.

DUBLIN:

PRINTED FOR JOHN RICE, 111, GRAFTON-STREET.

1799.

1798 Dec

BRITISH MUSEUM

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MEMOIRE, &c.

DUBLIN, DECEMBER 5, 1798.

OUR diſſenſions and our calamities have called forth the project of a new, and, it is hoped, a final arrangement in the politics of this iſland. It is propoſed to augment the energy of the empire, by ſimplifying its Conſtitution, and to tranquiliſe Ireland by removing a great domeſtic cauſe of irritation.

An Union, conſidered in the abſtract, does not ſtrike me with that aſſemblage of horrors, which ſome perſons appear to feel. The conditions of the contract muſt render the meaſure ſalutary or pernicious. It ſeems a queſtion merely of terms, for I cannot admit the exiſtence of a ſeparate legiſlature to be ſo eſſential to Ireland, and ſo much an integral part of the public welfare, as to render a treaty, for conſolidating the Parliaments of Great Britain and Ireland, at all events inadmiſſible.

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I have no grounds to form a conjecture that the liberties of the Iriſh people may not be as ſecure under the ſuperintendence of an imperial, as of a domeſtic legiſlature. Few men have ever been inveſted with power who did not feel a diſpoſition to exceed the limits regularly preſcribed. As a corrective of this evil tendency, we have recourſe to the eſtabliſhment of our parliamentary tribunals, appointed in a good meaſure by the people, but acting wholly under the controul of public opinion. All the powers of the nation are a fiduciary depoſit in the hands of theſe councils, and of their coeſtate the crown, to be exerciſed for the nation's advantage. Such is the legiſlative function; it is equally their duty to reviſe the conduct of thoſe perſons who adminiſter the executive authority, and to ſuperintend the diſtribution of juſtice.—Here is the principle, but to what extent ſhall it be applied? a ſingle inſtitution of controul may be productive of eſſential ſervice, and yet two, as well as twenty, may be exceſſive, inconvenient and dangerous. By the liberties of the people, I underſtand the confidence which every man ought to feel, that he may ſafely and freely do every act, which is not forbidden by laws enacted for the welfare of the community; and that he cannot be moleſted in his perſon or poſſeſſions, unleſs he offend againſt thoſe eſtabliſhed principles. Foremoſt in the catalogue ſtand the trial by jury,

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the common law and ſtatute right of *habeas corpus*, the adminiſtration of civil and criminal juſtice by regulations of law, poſitive, notorious and invariable. The guarantee of theſe rights is the firſt object of civil ſociety. This is the end; Peers and Repreſentatives are but the means. But again: what reaſon is there to ſuppoſe that the ſupreme tribunals of the Union may not be as open to complaint, and as vigilant in redreſs, as anxious to prevent injuſtice, and to avoid impoſing an hardſhip, as our Iriſh parliament?

To many it would be highly pleaſing to erect an independent Government on every ten ſquare miles of Europe. We might rehearſe the advantages which the inhabitants were to derive from ſuch organization; and ſurely the paſſions ariſing from local attachment would not fail to be highly gratified. But then how many avenues would be thrown open for faction? What diſunions among the people! What feebleneſs, what diſtraction in the public councils! What a feveriſh exiſtence for the ſubjects, where the paſſions and prejudices of individuals are ſo cloſe at hand, as to be felt in every operation of Government! Such ſtates would be incapable of vigorous enterprize or effectual combination for reſiſtance. They muſt fall beneath the firſt powerful adverſary. But

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whilſt caſual circumſtances retarded the inevitable doom, the miſerable people would be the prey of miſchiefs, from which no degree of ability could protect them; teazed by diſſenſions, factions and diſcontents, and fluctuating, diſcordant, inoperative adminiſtrations.

Let me not be conſidered fanciful in the poſition I am about to lay down, that the arguments addreſſed to our national pride may exactly be inverted. The appearance of paradox will vaniſh, when we conſider how much more real importance Ireland will derive, when by the ſhare in the general repreſentation, which ſhe is entitled to obtain, ſhe will be enabled to influence in ſome reſpect the councils of the empire, than at preſent whilſt ſhe receives laws from the more powerful member of the confederacy; and from that quarter muſt ſhe ever receive laws, whilſt ſhe adheres with unreflecting pride to this languid and ambiguous independence.

I have been led ſo far into the inveſtigation of a ſubject collateral to my original undertaking. The range of enquiry which opens from it is immenſe. If it were even ripe for diſcuſſion, I have traced to myſelf a more limited duty. But as to the general queſtion of the Union of our legiſla-

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ture with that of the empire, it ſeems to me to ſtand upon the terms which ſhall be propoſed, and upon national expediency; and the rule of expediency again reſolves into theſe two propoſitions: 1ſt, The circumſtances of Europe and the ſtate of Ireland render it the eſſential intereſt of Ireland to be cloſely combined with Britain; and 2d, an incorporation of all the powers of the two ſtates, executive and legiſlative, is the moſt permanent and eligible form of connection. I do apprehend that, in the actual circumſtances of Europe, every motive, by which man, in a ſtate of nature, is induced to abridge his native rights, and aſſociate for mutual ſecurity with his neighbour, does urge Ireland to cling to the ſiſter iſland, and cultivate the connection with every reaſonable aſſiduity. Suppoſe France ſhould intrigue herſelf into an eſtabliſhment in this country. When ſhe had extinguiſhed the funds on which depend our national ſecurities, and divided the lands among her adventurers and partiſans; when ſhe had haraſſed our commerce by exactions, and our population by military requiſitions, what a bleſſed conſolation would remain in the legiſlative independence of Ireland! But when we do not perceive that any particular advantage is in jeopardy, we are diſpoſed to conſider it, as confirmed beyond all hazard, and that the eſta-

bliſhment

bliſhment of another object for which we contend, cannot interfere with the former. On political matters you cannot reaſon forward in a direct line; you muſt often ſubtract when you would expect to add, and divide where you have hoped to multiply.

But people talk of the National Debt of Britain; and what then? I contend for it, that though, not legally, we are at this hour effectively pledged to ſupport, with our reſources, the credit of Great Britain. It is our intereſt to do ſo, even to the extent of contributing in aid of the National Debt according to our means, in caſe ſuch contribution could be neceſſary. If the National Debt of Britain were effaced by a Bankruptcy, a very great number of the perſons who conſume our articles of fabric and export, would be reduced to penury, a ſtagnation of trade muſt enſue, and goods be thrown back upon the hands of the manufacturers. Follow this calamity of a failure of demand through all its ramifications; a general depreſſion of induſtry from the ceſſation of encouragement; every conſumption diminiſhed, the produce of land comes to be leſs in requiſition; land and houſe-rents fall; and all the elegant arts decline which thrive in luxurious life, and are ripened by the overflow of opulence. Take the matter in another point

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of view. The credit of Britain gives efficacy to her reſources; it covers the ocean with her fleets; it is the lever by which ſhe moves mankind; one of the pedeſtals of that Coloſſus which beſtrides the world!—What would become of this Iſland, unprotected and unprepared for the event, if the artificial power of Britain were ſubverted? We ſhould certainly neither have ſecurity for what we now poſſeſs, nor receive encouragement to improve it. If France continued omnipotent, we ſhould be her ſlave. If her preſent frantic vigour were exhauſted, to be the ſubject of conteſt on our own ſoil among the European powers, or their factions, would be our mildeſt deſtiny. I have not reſted, becauſe the reader can eaſily ſupply the deficiency, on the intermediate pillage of the holders of every ſort of property. Of theſe obligations to ſupport Great Britain, ariſing from private intereſt, the former applies, in ſome degree, to every nation whoſe commerce feels the invigorating influence of Britiſh ſpeculation; the latter is appropriate to Ireland.

But that a neceſſity ſhould ariſe for repairing a breach in the credit of Great Britain, is a mere fiction of the imagination, introduced to demonſtrate, by an example, the degree of ardour which ſhould animate our attachment to the ſiſter nation. I am aware that her former treatment of

Ireland

Ireland was culpable, but the conduct of Ireland to herſelf was yet more ſo. I am no friend to poſthumous reſentments. It is more becoming the dignity of a wiſe people to throw our paſſions into the ſhade, and cultivate our intereſts. What intercourſe can be ſo beneficial to Ireland as with a rich country, ſtretched by it, within a few hours ſail, poſſeſſing the moſt extenſive commercial connexions in the world; a ſure and ſteady mart, and a quick return; miſtreſs of a powerful navy, which is equally engaged to protect our trade and our repoſe, and enjoying the habitual reſpect of the world, in which we participate?

That Britain was vulnerable on the ſide of her public credit and reſources, and that they were marked by deſtiny to direct the blow which ſhould lay proſtrate that immenſe power, was among the deluſions of that credulous and deſervedly-unfortunate party, who, diſguiſing their ambition, very probably to themſelves, under the name of patriotiſm, endeavoured, by an apoſtate connexion with France, to ſeize the Government of Ireland. The finances of Britain cannot fail whilſt they are managed with ability. Though the nominal debt is immenſe, the capital is irredeemable; and the perpetual annuities, which conſtitute in truth the charge, are paid to reſidents in the country.

country. It is the right hand ſettling accounts with the left; whilſt ſuch is the caſe, the courſe of circulation may be diverſified, but the property of the nation cannot be overwhelmed. The improvement of the ſteam-engine, the various modern diſcoveries in chemiſtry, the application of theſe diſcoveries to manufacture, the abridgment of labour by introducing machines, have performed what is perhaps better than paying off the debt of the American war; they have created funds which are equivalent to the impoſition. Ingenuity and enterprize will in like manner reduce the burden of the preſent loans to a feather weight. Perhaps inquiſitive reſearch is at this very inſtant employed in exploring or in opening the markets, by the ſupply of which this momentous operation is to be effected. From France herſelf we ſhall draw back, as we have done from America, a part of the expence of the conteſt we maintain againſt her; for ſhe has ſacrificed her manufactures to the War and Revolution. At the return of Peace ſhe will have wants which can be moſt ſatisfactorily provided for by the Engliſh merchants, and ſhe will diſgorge the plunder of the Continent into their counting-houſes.

I muſt not diſſemble that theſe ſentiments originate in great partiality to the ſiſter nation. But

it is a partiality founded on a ſenſe of her virtues; on the importance of the functions ſhe performs towards human nature; on the character and glory of the people, and on the eſſential utility, which I apprehend accrues to this, my more immediate country, from her ſituation as a part of that reſpectable Empire. If I could flatter myſelf with the expectation, that any degree of public attention may be beſtowed upon opinions ſo humbly preſented by the mediocrity of ſtation and ability, I ſhould tender them as evidence of this fact, that the education and habits of an Iriſh Catholic do not indiſpoſe him to the glory of the Britiſh Empire. The contrary has been aſſerted often, and by perſons of no ſmall authority. Some years back, the Dublin Journal, a publication in many inſtances of great improvidence and indecorum, but for a long time a peculiar object of our Government's care and patronage, ſpeaking of the loyalty of that part of the King's ſubjects, uſed theſe remarkable expreſſions:—" it exactly reſembles the loyalty of a " chained tyger to his keeper!!"

How many controverſies have been moved on the reciprocal obligations of Great Britain and Ireland as fraternal ſtates; in any of which, if the Parliament had been ſo conſtituted as to have followed its own minority into the popular notions of

of the day, there was an end to the unity of the Empire. If the two nations incline variouſly on public queſtions, they can only be employed in watching each other. And will any man of ordinary obſervation ſay, that he can count on the temper and forbearance of their reſpective people, to correct theſe diſorders in the conſtitution? No; but Parliament can be induced, as hitherto has been the caſe, to preſerve the harmony of the federal connexion. Why reſort to circuitous means and complex machinery for an effect which may be produced ſimply and directly, and by the ſacrifice of a very ſecondary object? I am ſure the Iriſh Parliament has done well in preſerving, on many queſtions, a coincidence with the Miniſter. It is needleſs to ſcrutinize the motives which actuate men, when their conduct produces beneficial conſequences. Few take the trouble to weigh the widely miſchievous inconvenience of bickerings and broils between the Sovereign and the States, or between the repreſentative bodies of two nations whoſe concerns croſs each other every day, and whoſe views and intereſts muſt be intimately combined, or irreconcileably diſcordant. How invidious the taſk we impoſe upon our Parliament, by majorities, under the ſuſpicion of influence, to thwart the opinions which their own diſcontented minority diſſeminates through the people! It has been tauntingly ſaid, on innume-

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rable occaſions, that our Independent Government takes orders from a power we do not recognize, and carries them to our Independent Parliament, by which they are ratified! That ſuch mock Independence affords no reaſonable occaſion for vanity. I have already touched upon this ſubject. To reject a permanent ſettlement on the ground of vanity, reſembles the ſimplicity of a poor man preferring gaudy tatters to the comforts of induſtry.—I cannot ſee the wiſdom of poſtponing the uſeful, to the ornamental parts of civil liberty.

But how, it may be ſaid, are we to be enriched? Britain has no new commercial advantages to impart. What commercial laws, and conceſſions can atchieve, is already pretty well accompliſhed. What are laws, and opportunities, without a capital? They are but as beautiful machinery to a mill without a water-courſe. The improvement of agriculture, and the increaſe of the linen trade, and more than either, the ſo-much-reprobated repeal of the penalties againſt adhering to the Catholic Religion, have added much to the wealth of Ireland. But more muſt

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be done to meet the exigencies of our population. Where the linen manufacture has not taken root, the people, at a certain diſtance from the coaſt, are wretched. They cannot recur to any other employment than the mannfacture of land, ſo that the landholder has a double monopoly againſt them: he can command his own price for the ground he lets, and he can fix what value ſuits him on the labour he purchaſes. The general introduction of manufactures muſt open new markets for labour, and raiſe the price of it by a ſteady, and not a violent operation, before we can expect, to ſee the condition of our Poor materially ameliorated.

I did once imagine that the cauſes I have here enumerated, proceeding ſlowly, though regularly, would have been adequate to the remedy of our diſorders. But experience, and the obſervation of what daily paſſes, have convinced me that this ſanguine hope is vain, until a great change of manners ſhall have taken place; and this only is to be effected by a great change of Conſtitution. Conteſts for power in the upper circles would be innocent, if to them they were confined; but

but acting on the tenacity of the Proteſtants, and the expectations of the Catholics, they carry bitterneſs to every fire-ſide in Ireland. You muſt root out theſe feuds if you would baniſh wretchedneſs from the land; you muſt exclude them; not by elevating the pride of theſe, or reducing thoſe to ſullen acquieſcence, but by compleatly removing the cauſe, by placing our concerns under the care of a ſuperior power, impartial by ſituation, and by the abſence of the local paſſions and prejudices that diſtract us. The People of Ireland will then have an undivided intereſt. Foreign Capital may be induced to viſit us; the property of natives will ſtagnate in the country, and be formed into maſſes ſufficient to give employment to our people. It is from hence I expect the augmentation of our trade, the increaſe of export and of home conſumption. When the alarms of people of property are at reſt, and a perfect confidence created in the ſettlement of the country, they will not heſitate to aſſiſt induſtrious or ſpeculating men by advancing money or credit to them. I have in my view the great number of ſmall banks, and liberal diſcount-offices, which are to be met in every part of England and Scotland.

Two other circumſtances diſpoſed me to conſider favourably the project of an Union with Great Britain. Examining, not long ſince, in a courſe of amuſing ſtudy, the treaty of the year 1785, generally called the Commercial Propoſitions, I obſerved it to be a well-intended and beneficial ſyſtem, but defective in ſome reſpects. There was not a juriſdiction ſuperior to both contracting parties, to enforce the rules, and decide upon the breach and the performance of the agreement. In conſequence of this chaſm, all the wiſe purpoſes of the adjuſtment were very likely to be rendered abortive. My other cauſe of conviction was the very great reſemblance, which, previous to the Union, Scotland bore to the actual ſtate of Ireland. Scotland had a popular and a faſhionable religion, actuated againſt each other by a degree of rancour infinitely more inveterate and unmitigated than the ſectarian animoſities of Ireland. The Government was jealous of the people, and the people of the Government. She had too her parliamentary factions, who as well as their co-adjutors at Weſtminſter, aſſiduouſly fomented the diſcontents of a people, without exception the moſt turbulent in the world. I do not count ſo much upon the Weſt-India or Plantation trade to the ſingle port of Glaſgow, when I talk of the means, by which the

the Scotch grew to be rich, orderly and contented. No,—internal quiet was the mine to which they owe their wealth; it was to the eſtabliſhment of private credit and confidence on the baſis of tranquillity; it was to the formation of a Government, which had no feeling of ſubaltern reſentment, of habitual or hereditary prejudice. But here let me mark the error of the Scotch Union, as a leſſon and a warning to the legiſlatures of both countries, to examine narrowly into the circumſtances of Ireland, and leave no grievance unredreſſed, when the adjuſtment is completed. If the people of Scotland had been emancipated by aboliſhing the heritable juriſdictions, the Rebellions of 1715, and 1745, would as to that country have been, moſt probably, prevented.

Muſt the ſettlement of Ireland by domeſtic means be then given up as an hopeleſs enterprize? Such I apprehend to be the fact, although I have not always entertained that ſentiment. And as I do not aſpire to ſeek the favour of any party, more eſpecially that of which upon every principle I diſapprove, I ſhall lay down, preciſely as they occur, the grounds of my opinion.—I begin with the general diffuſion through the country of what are called Orange Lodges, and the temper which

which appears to actuate these societies. They claim the credit of having assembled for the protection of a tottering throne. Let them take the full merit of their loyalty. But the spirit of revenge which, under their auspices, has so often lingered after victory, and the dominion over their fellow subjects, which they seem to claim as their reward, reduce very considerably the value of their services.

These clubs, are instituted to suit protestants of every age, and education and degree. Filiations of them have been formed in most country towns, in the University, in many regiments, and even among school-boys, so that if they are of doubtful portent to the harmony of society, the evil is not like to be of limited extent or short duration. The drawing-room and even the nursery bear their emblems. It is not a benevolent association, calculated to extend or to preserve, or to improve the system of pure religion, by which they consider themselves enlightened. The first object of the confederacy is to maintain, and the next to celebrate the political supremacy of one part of the King's subjects over another.—They commemorate not

> Thy great name, Nassau,
> Who stamp'd the bless'd deed of Liberty and Law—

not the purifier of the monarchy and the founder

of civil freedom, but a ſort of ſpurious William of their own creation, reſembling John Weſley, or any other fanatic founder of a ſect, without a trait of character, by which, if he repaſſed on earth, the ſage and hero would recogniſe himſelf as fairly repreſented.

Far be it from me to ſuppoſe that many very honourable perſons may not have been induced to enrol themſelves under this ſymbol of diſſenſion. We have paſſed through a very trying ſeaſon to men's feelings. There is not any ſituation in which one is ſo likely to be led aſtray, as when he fixes his eyes upon one ſide only of a political object; and that paſſions, terror, and reſentment, ſcreen from his view the conſequences by which his firſt conception might be corrected. But let me tell them, that they are under an error when they hope to manage the monſter whom they nouriſh. Thoſe who are now among the moſt ſubmiſſive of their party will become its leaders, if it ſhall take root; and its exceſſes, the men I here addreſs, will in vain attempt to moderate. Lord George Gordon had never the fire of London in his contemplation. With all their faults, the perſons, who projected this late wanton inſurrection,

tion, had no participation of guilt with the ferocious mobs of Wexford and of Mayo.

Another circumſtance contributes to the deluſion of the Gentlemen I have been deſcribing. They do not feel the importance of the Catholics to this country.—I do not ſpeak of them as an opulent order in the ſtate—rich men "may flouriſh and may fade," but as they ſupply almoſt entirely the labouring and induſtrious claſſes of the community. If I treated of an Indian territory, I would ſay, let the mind of the Gentoo be free from every reſtraint, except the wholeſome horror of iniquity. Public proſperity proceeds from the baſe to the ſummit of the cone. The foundation muſt be large and firm to ſupport a durable ſuperſtructure. The Government, in combination with a part of the people, may, ſo far as phyſical force confers authority, impoſe reſtrictions on the Catholics; but Ireland will pine over the dungeon of her children. Without debaſing itſelf into a ſtanding jeſt to this reflecting Empire and age, by appearing to puniſh men for their Religion, a ſyſtem of manners may be introduced, which ſhall reduce, to an unoperative theory, all the advantages which the Conſtitution ſuppoſes them to enjoy, and which a wiſe Prince has

has ſtudied to procure for them. Now preciſely to this point does the invidious confederacy, called Orange-men, tend. Let us put by the conſideration, that people of every character and temper may procure admiſſion to the Society, and that the worſt propenſities of bad minds are not like to be reſtrained when there is a proſpect of protection: If this buſineſs continues, it muſt lead to outrages on perſons and property, and there will be no lack of juſtificatory pretences.* I put alſo out of view this fact, which in this age and country bears evidence, unfortunately too ſtrong of authenticity, that political aſſociations, on any extenſive ſcale, are in an extreme degree dangerous to any Government.

The ſpirit of the inſtitution is to inculcate an opinion that its votaries form a ſuperior order in the ſtate, with ſuperior title to every kind of conſideration and privilege. As a leading principle, it aſſerts that certain immunities of our Conſtitution have been improvidently granted to the Catholics,

* What numbers, during the late diſturbances, would not believe the evidence of their ſenſes, that every Papiſt was not a rebel! How many were ſadly chagrined at the propriety with which the perſons of property of the Romiſh communion acted!

tholics, and that ſimilar conceſſions are in future to be reſiſted. Can any ſcheme be deviſed more effectually calculated to excite antipathies and diſguſt among the inhabitants of the ſame country, and render them adverſe to each other, in ſentiment, as pole from pole? And can that divided country proſper? Can it be denominated Independent? Can human happineſs be brought to perfection? What retribution for theſe evils is a titular independence in which a few men have an intereſt? Not a man in Ireland feels more ardently for the liberty of my country; but I call for practical Independence, which ſhall be felt in every ſinew through the land. I am adverſe to the ſyſtem under which

——— a factious band agree
To call it Freedom, if themſelves be free.

I proteſt againſt a ſcheme thus fanciful and oppreſſive.

Let me conclude the detail of evils by calmly laying before theſe Societies, the perverſe temper, the barbariſm, let me call it, which they neceſſarily muſt induce, and neceſſarily perpetuate. Men in eaſy circumſtances may turn aſide for conſolation, from an object that diſguſts them. Among perſons of the higher claſs, the arrogant pretenſions of a rival party may only occaſion an irritation.

tion. But, even ſo, they muſt aſſuredly become more indifferent to the public welfare, and more inactive in the improvement of their country. In humble life men are chained to the oar by their ſituation; there indeed will qualities be found too fit to produce miſchief, and materials too eaſy to be worked on. Little minds are prone enough to aſſume authority where they can, and to practiſe an overbearing inſolence of demeanor. The Proteſtant Mechanic, who has ſtudied manners and politics in an Orange Lodge, and has there been taught his meaſure of forbearance, will be ſpoiled with regard to his own duties, and he will equally ſpoil his neighbour, a man of more feeling than reflection, whom he teazes and bullies, and drives either into ſeditious turbulence, or enervated deſpondency. I am perſuaded a ſtate has no better reſource than in the well-regulated firmneſs of its People.—I borrow this ſentiment, which, on former occaſions, actuated me in ſome feeble efforts to ſerve the country through the Catholics, from Dr. Adam Smith, an excellent judge of the ſprings by which men are moved. He attributes the proſperity of England to the temper of the Yeomanry; and this character he thinks is formed in a good meaſure by their election privileges. It is apparent, that I conſider the

Union

Union rather eligible by the ſyſtem of police to which it leads, than on any other conſideration. Here let me add one word, called for by the conſtruction I put on a pamphlet, publiſhed, it would ſeem by authority, in order to break the ground for this diſcuſſion. Unleſs the Servants of the Crown mean, among other internal regulations, to include a ſettlement under the head of religious difference, completely co-extenſive with the grievance, then will an incorporation of the Legiſlatures be found a meaſure bad for Ireland, but, if poſſible, worſe for Britain.—The penalties againſt Catholics ought to be repealed, if it were only to diſcountenance the Orange faction, by ſhewing the error and impotence of the Aſſociation. The meaſure would be popular and acceptable. I aſſert this fact in contradiction to the State Priſoners, who averred, in their examination before the Committee of Parliament, that emancipation, as it has been called, was ſlighted, except as a pretence. So perhaps it was among the Catholics with whom they mixed, or thoſe on whom they practiſed; the latter, an ignorant peaſantry; the former, a cabal of ill-intentioned Democrats, who dreaded not any thing ſo much, as leſt the King's Government ſhould diſarm the public diſcontent

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by a conceſſion ſo highly grateful. There is, and always has been, a body of Catholics, numerous, reſpectable, and of ſteady loyalty, to whoſe minds there is no nearer object.

I am aware that I brave the cenſure of many reſpectable perſons whoſe ſentiments are caſt in a different mould, and whoſe paſſions are exaſperated by recent reſentment. What! a lenient rule of policy for ungrateful men, whoſe rebellion has produced ſo much public and private calamity! Exactly ſo. If every Catholic in Ireland had been a rebel, it ought to make no difference. There is an immutable rule of right and wrong, politic and inexpedient, by which the merits of the queſtion are to be tried and decided. And again: if even ſuch were the caſe, the moment of victory would be the critical time to make the conceſſion; what might have been in the laſt year injudicious, as liable to be repreſented a puſillanimous compromiſe, might at this day be compliment and heroic ſacrifice. The whole continent of America was in open hoſtility at the time that liberal terms of accommodation were propoſed. Here I am at iſſue with the Orange-men. They propoſe to encreaſe the weight of the criminal law by a

corrective

corrective diſcipline, regulated by each private man's ſenſe of propriety. I aſſert that a ſtrong Government ought for ſome time to be maintained, and the laws to be enforced with rigid impartiality. But no other awe, no fetters on the mind, no ſubjection. Am I told that it is not intended thus to debaſe the public mind of Ireland? To be ſure theſe deſigns are not in familiar contemplation; I think better of my ſpecies. But let me tell theſe Societies, that if one man in fifty expects to mend his fortune by dabbling in the ſyſtem of eſpionage, which has ſo long vexed this country, that man is of more efficacy to do ill, than ever ſo many well meaning, inactive men, are to counteract him. And let me tell them, that the tendency of their inſtitution to produce the effect I have deſcribed, according to the habitual tenor of human proceedings, is not more regular than that of a ſphere to drop to the ground by the laws of gravitation.

I am diſcourſing of lenity and mercy. What has the repeal of the diſqualifications againſt Catholics to do with the Rebellion?—In certain counties there was a riſing of the peaſantry; provoked, cajoled, ſeduced by certain gentlemen,

Deiſts, ſome of Catholic, more of Proteſtant education. The inſurgents were Catholics, juſt as any man, who offends the laws againſt property, is, within the ſame limits, a Catholic, becauſe it happens to be the popular religion of thoſe diſtricts. They were combated by Catholic militia regiments; by Catholic noblemen, gentlemen and farmers; that is, by all thoſe who had kept themſelves aloof, not from the religious, but the political illuſion. Indeed I believe the principal perſon in point of dignity of the Catholic party did exert himſelf with more gallantry, than any other of his rank, not profeſſedly a military or militia officer. When the clown had proceeded a little way under his doctors and generals of the rights of man, he bethought himſelf of his early reverential impreſſions; and having out of about two thouſand five hundred Catholic Prieſts, who are in Ireland, collected five and twenty in the different rebellions, mingled together ſuperſtition and rapine, and murder and liberty in a manner, which I want words to ſtigmatiſe, which I am appalled to contemplate; as to ferocity, very ſimilar to all other mobs; and, as to ſuperſtition, moſt like what Mr. Bruce relates of Abyſſinia. Now, which is it better to reclaim thoſe people, or to confirm their

diſorderly

diſorderly habits? They have proved themſelves to be in that ſtate of ſociety, where obſervances have more influence upon the mind, than moral principle. A ſtate, which no ſyſtem of religion that was ever known on earth, is calculated to produce among its votaries. It is clearly indicative of ſomething vilified and ſtupid in the mind, not from nature ſurely, but ſuperinduced by extrinſic circumſtances. It is the reſult of a certain courſe of manners, whilſt theſe continue, it will prevail. But whenever by teaching a man to ſet a higher value on himſelf, you give a greater expanſion to his faculties, he will be formed to a more enlightened mind, and will acquire a ſuperior tone of vigorous underſtanding.

Somewhat previous to this inſurrection, the Orange Society was tranſplanted from its original nurſery in the county of Armagh; and, being applied to parts of the country, where even upon its own pretexts of juſtification it was not neceſſary, did favour in no ſmall degree the intrigues of the incendiaries in the French intereſt. The ignorant people ſaw a myſterious aſſociation, of which they were in ſome reſpects the object, but they could not divine to what intent. I know that this circumſtance,

ſtance, and the terrors, which from thence were artfully deduced, did in many inſtances drive the common people to ſeek for arms. The Iriſh peaſantry have been, from various prediſpoſing cauſes, at all times but too prone to riot; and when this firſt ſtep had been gained, it was no hard taſk to lead them forward. Why ſhould Democracy, ſolely a political monſter, be oppoſed by reviving religious prejudices, which never exiſted to any beneficial purpoſes. There were holds of full as much efficacy and more capable of extenſive application. The truth is, that whether from perverſeneſs, or blindneſs, or the horror of all kinds of innovation, or the occaſional appearance of ſome perſons on the ſcene in both dramas, there has been a ſtrange confuſion of a juſt with a baſe purſuit, of men who ſought to improve their condition under the ſtate, and of men who deſired to ſubvert it. I will exactly lay down the difference.

The Gallic Reformer invited you to change for change ſake; the Catholic pointed to an inconvenience in your laws, and he ſhewed you how he would himſelf derive benefit from the alteration. The objects of the former were indefinite, and the conſequences incalculable; but in a ſingle glance you could hold under your eye

eye the beginning and end, and all the implications of what was ſought by the Catholic.—You tell him, I think the Church Eſtabliſhment is connected with the peace and property of the country. I wiſh to ſecure it, in its actual courſe of ſucceſſion. He replies, that the diſqualification, of which he complains, affords no additional ſecurity to the Church; that its pillars are the connexion with Britain, and the balance of property. That he does not deſire the aggrandizement of his fellow-religioniſts, as a body; but that there ſhould be no obſtacle in the way, of any individual of that communion, to puſh, to the utmoſt extent of which they are capable, the advantages of birth and fortune, talents and induſtry. Theſe are the diſtinctions which grow neceſſarily out of the ſocial inſtitutions; but we in this country add a new diſtinction, Religion; and, as it is unnatural, ſo does it appear to me to be impolitic; and, as it is of very univerſal operation, I do think it diſtorts and vitiates the entire ſyſtem. Without any leaning to the doctrines of the Church eſtabliſhed, there is not in the land a more true friend than the writer of this eſſay, to the principle of ſupporting the dignity and poſſeſſions of its Clergy. My reaſons are ſolely political. I think, in a better ſtate of things than we have witneſſed

witneſſed for ſome time, that reformed epiſcopacy might hold the balance between the other great religious bodies. The popular Religions ought to be provided with every liberty and decent accommodation for worſhip, and with the means of rendering their Paſtors reſpectable. But an opulent eſtabliſhment could not ſuit them. To divide the wealth of the Church, from the wealth of the State, would only give occaſion to new broils, and produce an order of things, in my opinion, unjuſt, but ſurely unnatural. Here is the ſcope and courſe of my attachment. So far as my obſervation extends, the reflecting Catholics of this country never entertained a wiſh to give an eſtabliſhment to their Clergy. Shall we be told that, as they were uneaſy under the civil diſqualifications, ſo if all differences between them and the State were reduced to the eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment, that would furniſh an occaſion of repining. I anſwer, that ſuch is by no means the neceſſary conſequence. The civil diſqualifications are of a nature to croſs a man every day in his intereſt, and in his paſſions. The Religious eſtabliſhment affects the one not at all, and the other very ſlightly. People meet, or think they meet, the affected ſuperiority of a neighbour in daily ſuperciliouſneſs of look and geſture, and in all the ordinary offices of intercourſe.—The penalties yet

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in force againſt the Catholics muſt by ſome perſons be unpleaſantly or ſeverely felt; but yet it would, compared with the number whom they affect, be idle to treat of them, at this day, as of a very oppreſſive burden. They are the watchword for a party. They miniſter to a vanity that ought not to exiſt. They feed unjuſtifiable pretenſions. They confuſe the duties of the ſubject, and diſtract him in the performance of them. They tend to ulcerate * the minds of the people.—"My "Clergyman is better endowed than yours," is an aſſertion not calculated to create ſo much controverſy and pique, as this other—"by the law "of the land I am your ſuperior!" It is moreover not the temper in which a demand is made, but the juſtneſs of the propoſal, that ought to influence

* I muſt advert to the temper of a Poem called the Orange; a printed collection of Orange ſongs; and, until very lately, to the tenor of the newſpapers in that intereſt, to ſhew that if the Catholics were willing to be at eaſe, they would not be permitted. I copy this ſtanza from one of them; it appeared ſince the rebellion was ſuppreſſed. Deſcribing the overthrow of the rebels—

See their Clergy march before them,
With their ſacred veſtments o'er them;
Sprinkling them with holy water,
And calling on to blood and ſlaughter.

It is not every man, who deſpiſes thoſe ridiculous revilings, that will not be rouſed by them.

fluence the judgment of a law-giver. If the people are unreaſonable, be they never ſo clamorous, he ought to riſe in his vigour and repreſs them.

How eaſily might all theſe matters be arranged, if the Catholics would only be ſubmiſſive, and accept the protection which theſe Clubiſts hold out to their loyalty, only now and then ſeaſoned by a little ſharpneſs of obſervation; that is, in more familiar language, "let matters remain as they "are." In the name of all thoſe feelings which are irritated and inflamed at the proſpect of diminiſhing your hopes of Parliamentary importance, are men, conſtituted like yourſelves, to behold every day the travellers paſſing and repaſſing, from humble ſituations to eminent honours in the State, and do you expect they ſhall never long to join you in the journey? *This world was made for Ceſar.* O admirable adepts in the ſcience of the human heart! O benevolent and conſiderate Fellow-Citizens! In what reſpect does the Conſtitution of a Catholic differ from your own, that he ſhould ſhrink in awe before the ſilly emblem of your faction, or tremble at the polluted name of the great William?

Forbearances of that nature are, I conceive, not to be expected; and, leaſt of all, under the circumſtances to which I have ſo often pointed. Rich men will pine after the compliments which generally

generally await on wealth. You cannot contract their means of proſpering, without ruining the reſources of the State; and that, give me leave to prophecy, the ſupreme Government, for its own intereſt, will not conſent to. Aſpiring young men at the Bar will perceive that the paſſage into the Houſe of Commons is not very difficult, and that, in a courſe of Parliamentary exertions, a man may riſe high without very extraordinary endowments. It does not ſtand to reaſon that theſe claims can be at reſt, whilſt the inducement to urge them is ſo very near; and though they may happen to be dormant, that is no evidence that they are forgotten. I do not preſume to deliver the ſentiments of any deſcription of my fellow-ſubjects.—On this very queſtion of an Union there muſt be ten thouſand different opinions among the Catholics, and nothing more unwiſe than to think of reconciling them. The land-owner, the merchant, the profeſſional man, the manufacturer, the inhabitant of Cork, and of Dublin, will have ſeparate views, and the peaſant will be indifferent to them all: The builder in Dublin, and the dairy-man contiguous to the port of Waterford, who pay the ſame rent, one for a few feet of ground, and the other for a mountain, will make up their minds upon very contradictory foundation. I anſwer for other perſons, if the compa-

riſon be not arrogant, as Fielding anſwered for mankind, when he drew appoſite characters, and faithfully deſcribed how men would act under certain influences. It is not advancing a claim to importance, but merely to avoid miſapprehenſion, that I declare, I do not write in political connexion with any perſon or party. Entertaining the warmeſt wiſhes and the beſt intentions for the ſervice of the Catholics, I have no diſpoſition to ſoothe, or court, or cultivate them. When they flouriſhed leſs than at this day, my inſignificant labours were freely given to their cauſe, and not, it was ſaid, without ſome utility. I contributed my mite to expoſe their claims, and to draw to them the attention of the Empire, certainly without detracting from their reputation on the ſide of attachment to the Conſtitution, or its duties. I owed to them, in return, the enjoyment for ſome time of a very grateful partiality. But as that partiality muſt have been either raſhly beſtowed, or withdrawn with levity, the rapid tranſition left my mind in a ſtate of apathy, as to any ſimilar event in future. I plead in my own right. I ſhould never have ſubmitted to the toil of delivering theſe ideas on the preſent topic, but that I conceived,

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from the Government publication* on that ſubject, that notions prevailed, where it is moſt important that they ſhould not, founded in inaccurate policy; and that, unleſs they were re-conſidered, whether the Union take place or not, we could only expect a patch-work ſettlement. I deny the poſition that the Catholics "demand "ſuch an alteration in the Parliamentary Conſti-"tution, as will give their numbers proportionate "power."—(page 20) No ſuch thing. That would be, to demand a Democracy, with all its inconveniencies. Population would then become ſuperior to property, and the acquiſitions of a Catholic would not be more ſafe than thoſe of any other. But they have demanded, and ought to demand, that, without moving any man from his legal place in our ſociety, the tenure of power ſhould be property, and not party. What could any man propoſe to himſelf by aſking for a good houſe, where he knew there muſt be an earthquake? I again deny that "any new Parlia-"mentary Teſt Oath ſhould be formed to ad-"mit the juriſdiction of the Pope." The juriſdiction of the Pope is as clearly aſcertained as the juriſdiction of the King's Bench, and would not be let in on temporal points, by omitting the oaths which aſſert the King's eccleſiaſtical ſupremacy,

* "Reaſon for and againſt an Union."

macy, and which deny the doctrine of the Euchariſt. The ſupremacy of the Pope is practically little more than reverential; and if they are left to themſelves, no perſons are more inclined than his Clergy to cavil at, and reſtrict it.—I am again conſtrained to controvert the poſition (page 25), that there would be indecorum or inconſiſtency in "admitting the Catholics to ſeats in the Le-"giſlature, and retaining the preſent Parliamen-"tary Conſtitution." I think more Catholics might gain admittance to Parliament, under the Borough ſyſtem, than if the baſis of Repreſentation were landed property.

Theſe extracts, and many like paſſages in the ſame publication, according to my apprehenſion, are erroneous in point of fact, inaccurate in policy, calculated to create in the Catholics diſguſt, and further miſapprehenſion in the Proteſtants. Yet it is a work in ſeveral other reſpects of good ſenſe and judgment. It proves in what manner the Catholic queſtion has been underſtood amongſt men of ſituation in the country, who have few opportunities of collecting the ſentiments of that people from intercourſe. It proves to the Catholics how much they have ſuffered by the giddy politics, that have prevailed amongſt many in the metropolis, in conſequence of which their cauſe became

became the footſtool of Democracy; the cant of men who had no ſerious wiſh upon the ſubject. It was huddled up and brought before the public amidſt a throng of impertinencies and indiſcretions, intemperance and innovations. It cannot then be a matter of ſurpriſe that its nature and conſequences were miſapprehended, and that opponents to it aroſe among ſome of the ſoundeſt heads in Ireland. When men were confuſed in the purſuit of their own intereſts, it was leſs extraordinary that the nature and extent of the demand ſhould not be comprehended by others, leſs accuſtomed to conſider them. But the diſpoſition to Jacobiniſm which prevailed in Dublin, (where I deny that it was any thing like univerſal) and in ſome other places, according as the influence of the Dublin party extended to them, is to be aſcribed, in the firſt inſtance to be ſure, to the intrigues of the French Union, and the vehemently ſeditious ſpeeches and publications, which were ſent among the people; but no ſmall part of it was owing to reſentment and diſguſt at the aſſiduous illiberality of the Corporation of this City, and to another cauſe not much noticed. Every body knows the importance of newſpapers in forming the mind of that numerous claſs in this country, who have not leiſure or reading habits beyond the

the daily occurrences, and the remarks that accompany them. Whilſt the prints, in the party of Government, inculcated order and the ſocial duties, they treated the Catholics with malignity. They were of courſe excluded from the houſes of the people thus offended, and the vacant ground was occupied by others, holding a language in all things directly contrary.

The train of evils I have laid down are not within the competence of the Iriſh Government to rectify. There are extravagant accumulations of the ſovereign power in the hands of a few men, which lead alſo to extenſive influence out of Parliament, and the Government cannot be carried on without the concurrence of theſe perſons.—It muſt then be ſubject to their paſſions and caprices, and to thoſe of their adherents, and neither may be liberal and enlightened. Some of them may even protect, or indirectly patroniſe the abuſes we complain of. The reply is, reform the parliament. Whatever attention I am capable of giving to any ſubject, I have beſtowed on the various propoſals, which have been offered to remedy the obvious defects and inconveniencies in the conſtitution of our Houſe of Commons. I have found no ſcheme offered which did not directly lead to one of theſe two practical conſequences, either to render more inveterate,

veterate, the evil of power accumulated in few hands, without a Sovereign's intereſt in the public welfare, and at the ſame time to confer a tenure more ſecure and more independent of the people; or on the other hand to endanger the ſtability of the throne; and of property, which ſeldom has ſurvived the evil deſtiny of its mate; to baniſh commerce by diſquiet; and conduct the nation through the ways of turbulence to anarchy.

To a diſorderly ſyſtem, reſembling in ſeveral particulars, if it were permitted to take effect, the adminiſtration of Egypt by Pacha, Beys, and Mamelukes, the king's adviſers can have no predilection. It is calculated in many inſtances to thwart the royal authority. For although the people have no great benefit from extra-parliamentary oppoſition, ſuch a thing ſeems to exiſt, to what extent men remote from power cannot determine. To riſk an appeal to the people at large would in theſe, or almoſt in any times, be, on the part of Government, an hazardous experiment. But how is the Government itſelf affected? Whilſt the adherence of Ireland to the Empire is, in any reſpect, precarious; whilſt it does not ſtand upon the ſtrongeſt legal ſecurity; whilſt the mettle of Ireland is liable to be ſtirred up to a diviſion by frequent and familiar debate, and high-ſounding appellations,

appellations, ſo long will the ſupreme Government and its Miniſter, the dependant Government, be jealous of this people. It will be apprehenſive of every party, and of the combination of any. We all know how prone, we little mortals are, to fall upon each other, on one pretence or other. The temper and the occaſion will be improved, and diſſenſions connived at, if not fomented, by perſons combining the will, with the ſituation, to act effectively for that purpoſe. The Government will not ſuffer any of the parties to be cruſhed, but will preſerve the equilibrium by occaſionally ſhifting its weight into the balance of the weaker. The Catholics, as more expoſed to the abuſe of power, as being more generally dependant and ſtanding more in need of protection and of quiet, ſeem likely to be the greateſt ſufferers in this horſe-play of politicians. It is very far from my thought in this ſtatement to treat with diſreſpect any individual, or any order whatſoever; but ſuch is the manner in which a perverſe intereſt is likely to affect the actions of very honourable perſons.

This is perhaps, we ſhall be told, an argument for a ſeparation. So it would be, but that a ſeparation would be a ſtill greater evil. An enterprize of ſeparation, ſucceſsful or otherwiſe, would juſt lay

lay the country down, where it was left by Cromwell; and very probably without the ſame opportunities to retrieve from the diſaſter.

What ſecurity have we then of better treatment and a kinder policy after an Union? The very beſt which the nature of the thing admits of, and that is the beſt poſſible, the urgent intereſt of the Imperial Government. Since the loſs of her American dominions, the Britiſh Cabinet ſeems to have felt the neceſſity of bringing forward all the energies of its remaining territory. Britain, as compared to France, is an artificial power which can only maintain, by the reſources of the State founded on the diffuſed proſperity and opulence of its ſubjects, the commanding attitude from which it cannot recede without deſtruction. The wedge muſt be ſtrong, firm, ſolid and compact, by which any impreſſion can be made on the extended front of France, or the edge turned of her modern enthuſiaſm. This is our ſhield againſt the poſſible injuſtice or partiality of men, who, on the Union eſtabliſhment, ſhall be called to adminiſter power in this iſland. Britain at preſent dreads to interfere, leſt it might turn out that ſhe was acting againſt her very valuable intereſts. So ſoon as that apprehenſion ceaſes, the Miniſters of the Crown will be under an irreſiſtible neceſſity to ſatisfy the People, and bring forward all the

capabilities of this kingdom. They are at this day ſo fully ſenſible that the State only exiſts by the accommodation of its ſubjects, that every neglected acre of ground in Great Britain is aſſiduouſly inveſtigated and put to culture. And will they abandon this fair land to be the ſport, and prey, and waſte of ſilly factions? Theſe factions have had a permiſſive exiſtence, and when the purpoſe ſhall ceaſe for which they were wanted, they will be ſuffered to decline into contemptuous oblivion.

For theſe reaſons I chearfully embrace the principle of a legiſlative Union with Great Britain. I do not think any thing better can be done for the country. In the exiſting circumſtances of this part of the Globe, and in any circumſtance which probable conjecture preſents as likely to ariſe, I do not ſee that Ireland can attain a prominent rank in the affairs of Europe. If my country cannot be great, I wiſh to ſee her comfortable. But in our politico-religious arrangement, although we ought to conſult the lights, we ſhould not be bound by the example of Great Britain. In that reſpect the analogy fails between the Countries.

6 DE 38

THE END.